

NORWICH UNIVERSITY

A History of the State Military College of Vermont.

MANY ILLUSTRIOUS SONS

Institution Founded at Norwich by Captain Alden Spooner in 1820--Removal to Connecticut--Return to Norwich and Change to Northfield--Oldest Military Collegiate Institution in the United States--More Than 500 Officers in Mexican and Civil Wars Sent Out From Norwich--The Present Faculty and Curriculum.

There are military colleges a-plenty in the country, some of them State institutions, some privately managed, some aristocratic, exclusive and expensive, some democratic and working for accomplishment and character rather than appearance, but none of them in age, in military standing, in the high achievements of its graduates, has so high a standing or possesses so much of interest as Norwich University at Northfield, the military college of the State of Vermont. Founded as a private undertaking, working at first without a charter from the State, it has proved its worth in so many ways, its officers and graduates and students have rendered such distinguished military services to the State and Nation that it has been made the military college of the State, has been granted power by its charter to confer degrees and is aided by an annual appropriation from the State.

The school has enjoyed a high standing from the first, and, when located at Norwich had students from every State in the country. It naturally attracted attention from the fact that its founder was Capt. Alden Spooner, who had been superintendent of the United States Military Academy at West Point. The military spirit was strong after the war of 1812 and the number of cadets authorized at West Point was limited. So a school founded and directed by one of Capt. Spooner's attainments and reputation easily drew ambitious youth from all sections.

Sketch of the Founder.

Capt. Spooner was born at Norwich in 1785 and entered Dartmouth, just across the river, in 1802. He had nearly completed his course there when he received an appointment as cadet of artillery in the United States service. The Military Academy at West Point then offered only a limited course, but young Spooner left Dartmouth and took up the military course, graduating in 1806. He was appointed assistant professor of mathematics immediately after graduation and continued on the teaching staff until 1815, when he was made superintendent. During his incumbency Congress increased its appropriation, enlarged the number of students and reorganized the whole course. On Capt. Spooner rested the responsibility of carrying into effect all the changes and he was really the founder of the present West Point. But he was not in accord with the army board of control as to the policy of developing the institution and withdrew, at the same time resigning his commission in the army. For some time he lectured on various branches of military science to a class of officers and citizens in New York and in 1819 he joined a party in an exploration survey of the northeastern boundary of the United States.

He remained in this service one year, but resigned to give his attention to a scheme of education that had interested him for several years. He perceived what he considered deficiencies in the courses offered at Dartmouth and West Point and in a lecture at that time stated his views and gave this definition of education: "Education in its most perfect state is the preparing of youth in the best possible manner for the correct discharge of the duties of any station in which he may be placed." Believing that our country needed institutions to equip young men for military service he founded in Norwich, the American Literary, Scientific and Military Academy. The citizens were interested in the undertaking, gave the land and contributed toward the necessary funds, and in 1820 the school was opened. The class that entered that fall numbered one hundred students, who came from all parts of the country. The course of study compared favorably with that of the colleges of that day and gave special attention to military branches. There was taught, according to the prospectus:

"The Law of Nations; Military Law; the Constitution of the United States and of the States severally; Metaphysics; Agriculture; Permanent and Field Fortifications; Field Engineering generally; the Construction of Marine Batteries; Artillery Duty; the Principles of Gunnery; a complete course of Military Tactics; the attack and defense of fortified places; the Ancient Tactics, particularly those of the Greeks and Romans, with a description of the organization and discipline of the phalanx and legion; Fencing; Military Drawing; Topography; Civil Engineering, including the construction of roads, canals, locks and bridges and architecture."

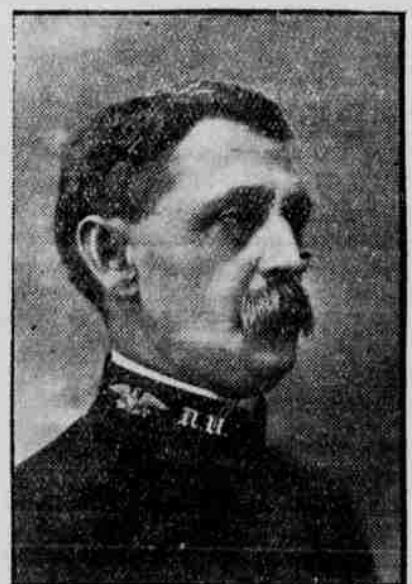
This, with courses in botany, mineralogy and chemistry, was a large sized course for the small faculty. The teaching corps at first was made up of Capt. Partridge, superintendent and professor of mathematics, philosophy and military science; George P. Marsh (afterward a well known diplomat) professor of languages; Rev. Rufus W. Bailey, chaplain and professor of ethics; E. B. Williston, professor of English; John M. Partridge, professor of practical geometry, topography and acting sword master.

Acting on an idea that is only now receiving recognition by professional educators, the students were not required to spend any specified time in completing the course. They finished it in one or six years as their capacity or previous knowledge made possible.

The present annual "hike" of the cadets is a reminiscence of the days of Capt. Partridge, when marches or scientific excursions were frequently taken under his direction. One remembered march was by rail to Winoski, then to Burlington, by boat to Ticonderoga; and another, to Claremont, N. H., to give an exhibition drill the same year. In 1826 a detachment from the old academy marched to Poughkeepsie, N. Y., and sailed to West Point, where they engaged in a competitive drill with the cadets, then went to New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and to Washington, where they were reviewed by the President.

Removal to Connecticut.

But while the school was successful in one sense it was still burdened with debt, and when a desirable offer was made to remove it to Middletown, Ct., it was accepted. The Episcopalians of that State were planning to establish a college and citizens of Middletown raised a liberal subscription but failed to secure it. The college was established at Hartford and is still known as Trinity College. They therefore offered to erect suitable



PRESIDENT C. H. SPOONER.

buildings and place them at the disposal of Capt. Partridge.

He moved there in April, 1825, and at the opening of the fall term had an attendance of 297 students. They came from every State in the Union, from Canada, the South American States and the West Indies.

But Capt. Partridge had larger ideas than conducting a private academy, however successful. He tried to secure a charter from the Connecticut Legislature giving his school the status of a college and authority to confer degrees, but was unsuccessful. So, disappointed in this, he closed the school at Middletown after four years and returned to Norwich to reoccupy the old buildings.

Return to Norwich.

Again there was war on one side of the Connecticut river and peace on the other. There was no hostility between the institution of learning at Norwich and that at Hanover, across the river, but there was war between the students and frequent clashes. Dartmouth tradition has it that the college always came out ahead, but there remains one story of a fight in the bridge that lasted two days, so that if the Norwich boys were defeated they were no mean antagonists. The "battle of the torn coats" fought on the Dartmouth side of the river, however, is agreed to have been won by Norwich.

On his return to Vermont the president did not relinquish the idea of securing for the school the privi-

leges of a college, but started to secure from Vermont what had been refused by Connecticut. He was elected town representative from Norwich in 1833 and 1834 and in the latter year secured a charter which changed the name to Norwich University and granted it full power to confer degrees and possess all other powers and immunities of a college. Capt. Partridge was returned to the Legislature again in 1837 and 1839.

First Military College.

The university commenced operations under its new charter in 1835, being the first military collegiate institution in the country, and it is today, so far as the writer knows, the only one having power to confer degrees for proficiency in military science. At the reorganization Capt. Partridge was elected president of the faculty and professor of military science and engineering, and continued to hold the presidency until 1843, and then he resigned only to assist in organizing the militia in various States.

He had called a convention at Norwich in 1838, made up of military officers and others, and a similar convention had met there annually for several years afterward, to discuss plans for the organization and discipline of the militia. He organized the military school at Portsmouth, Va., in 1839, and the success of that and other similar schools, together with his national reputation as a master of military science, brought his services into requisition by the various States. He had a plan for taking an advanced class of military and scientific students to Europe, to study battlefields and campaigns, the armies and military resources of the old world, and late in 1853 returned to Norwich to mature his plans for the expedition, but was taken suddenly ill and died January 17, 1854.

Gen. Ransom's Presidency.

Capt. Partridge's successor in the presidency was Gen. Truman B. Ransom, a graduate in 1825, who had been vice-president and professor of natural philosophy and engineering. He believed in the Partridge idea of long marches for the cadets and in 1846 took them through New Hampshire and Massachusetts to Boston, to camp on Boston common. President Ransom resigned on the breaking out of the Mexican war and was made lieutenant colonel of Franklin Pierce's regiment. He was killed while storming the heights of Chapultepec at the head of his regiment. Rev. Edward Bourns, his successor, though not a military man, proved an efficient head of the institution, but the great men of Norwich have been Partridge, Ransom and Jackson. The latter, a graduate from Norwich at its first commencement, was associated with Dr. Bourns as professor of military science, mathematics and civil engineering.

The cadet uniform in those days was a startling and wonderful thing, though no more extravagant than that of the militia or the regular army. In fact it was modeled on the regular army uniform, as it is today. The university regulations of the fifties prescribe the uniform thus: Claw hammer drill coat with three rows of cadet buttons, dark blue pants with two inch black velvet stripe down the seam, bell muzzie, high, blue cloth cap with gold band; for undress, single breasted frock, soft blue cap with velvet band and the letters N. U. in gold wreath in front. The arm then in use was the old flint lock Springfield that weighed twelve pounds. A hike in those days, trussed up in such a uniform and carrying a musket of that weight, meant more exertion than today.

Gen. Jackson's Rule.

Gen. Jackson was a great man in his day, and the State owes much to him. He was made brigadier-general of the Vermont troops in 1859 and at the beginning of the war was offered any position it was in the power of Governor Fairbanks to grant, but at the same time the Governor requested him to remain at the university and qualify the young men for duty as officers. He abandoned all thought of glory or promotion and remained at his post. He inspected the militia, organized new companies and regiments, sent out cadets to drill newly raised companies, and at the university gave instruction to regimental officers, not only for Vermont but for other States. Vermont kept up her quota of troops during the war and sent them to the field well prepared for service, and for much of the splendid record of the State during that struggle credit is due to the self-sacrificing man who stayed at home and trained others to go forward and win glory.

A Remarkable Record.

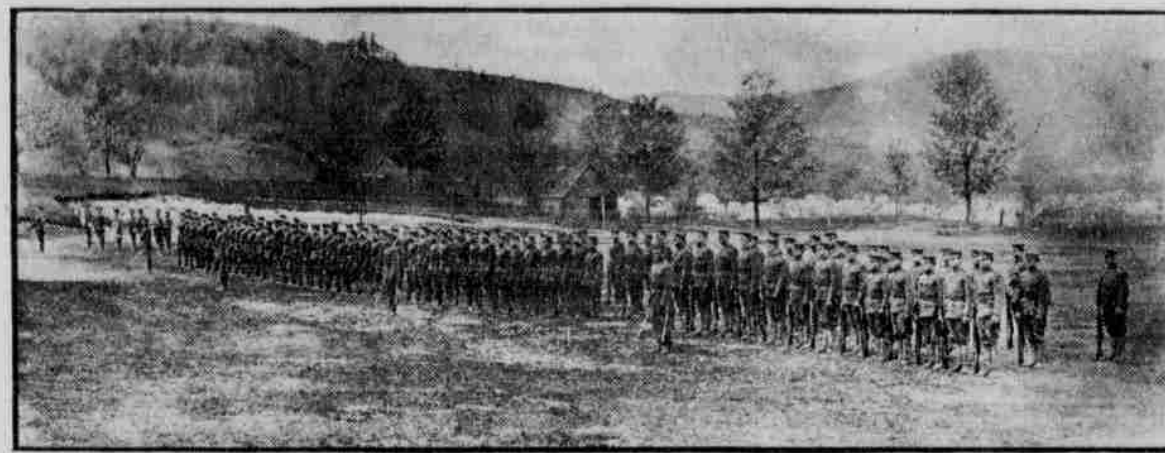
More than 500 officers who fought in the Mexican and Civil Wars were sent out from Norwich University. In the list are six major generals, eight brigadier generals, fifty colonels, seventy lieutenant colonels and majors and 150 captains, three rear admirals, six commodores, three captains and three commanders. That the old spirit is not dead was shown at the

time of the Spanish War, when over ninety per cent of the graduates since 1880 volunteered to serve in any capacity.

About the time that war opened the affairs of the university were not in the most prosperous condition. Dewey's victory at Manila called attention to the little institution, the nursery of soldiers, up here among the green hills. But Dewey was not the first Norwich man to win honor afloat. Josiah Tatnall, who originated that famous saying, "Blood is thicker than water," in explanation of his aiding the British in their conflict with the Chinese at Peking, was a graduate of the class of '23. Rear Admiral Charles C. Carpenter, '50, commanded the Asiatic squadron during the war between China and Japan. Rear Admiral Paulding was a graduate of '23 and Capt. Ward, of the same class, was instrumental in organizing the Naval Academy at Annapolis.

Distinguished Graduates.

Almost the entire list of graduates



NORWICH STUDENTS AT DRILL.

is entitled to appear on a roll of honor and only a few of those who have won military renown can be mentioned. Gen. Grenville M. Dodge commanded the sixteenth army corps in the Civil War and won high praise from his superiors. Among many others must be mentioned the two sons of Gen. Ransom, Admiral George Dewey, Frederick W. Lander, who as brigadier general, commanded the upper Potomac, Gen. George P. Buell, Col. Edmund Rice, said by Gen. Miles to have had the best drilled regiment in the army of the Potomac, Gen. W. S. Harney, Gen. Thomas H. Seymour, Gen. Robert H. Milroy, Gen. N. B. Gleason and so on through a long list. It would require a large volume to recite the achievements, in military and civil life, of the men who had their early instruction at Norwich University.

Removal to Northfield.

The buildings at Norwich were the north and south barracks. The latter was the principal building, being used for dormitory purposes and officers' quarters. This was burned in March, 1866. Citizens of Northfield offered land and buildings and the university was again removed from Norwich. The old north barracks has been converted into a high school building, and the university in its new location, with the fresh encouragement given it in recent years, has a far better equipment of buildings and other necessary adjuncts than Capt. Partridge ever dreamed of. The buildings comprise Alumni Hall, Barracks No. 1, Dewey Hall, Carnegie Hall and the drill hall, and in addition to these a handsome new building is nearly completed which will house the Weather Bureau and Prof. W. A. Shaw, who has charge of it.

The Teaching Force.

From 1870 to 1895 the university was without an active president most of the time. Rev. Allan D. Brown, who had served with credit in the Navy and reached the rank of commander, was secured for president of the Alumni Association of Boston having raised sufficient funds. The present president is Charles H. Spooner, himself a graduate of the university, whose high attainments and great executive ability have placed the institution in more prosperous circumstances than ever before.

Associated with him on the faculty are Herbert R. Roberts, dean of the faculty and professor of Latin and French; Leslie A. I. Chapman, Captain U. S. A., commandant and professor of military science and tactics; E. A. Shaw, professor of mathematics, now on leave at Dartmouth; C. S. Carleton, professor of field engineering and drawing; A. E. Winslow, civil engineering; Carl Vose Woodbury, chemistry and instructor in astronomy; William A. Shaw, meteorology and local forecaster of the United States Weather Bureau; Frank E. Austin, electrical engineering; Austin E. Spear, modern languages and Greek; Kemp R. B. Flint, English and history; Harlow A. Whitney, hygiene and sanitation; Charles N. Barber, assistant commandant; Theodore Bodde, physics and drawing; Leon E. Dix, assistant professor of mathematics.

The corps of lecturers is made up of Hon. Frank Plimley, international law; Hon. E. W. Gibson, constitu-

tional and commercial law; Rev. G. F. Fortier, social ethics; C. A. G. Jackson, English literature; H. C. Holden, C. E., road making.

The board of visitors appointed by the Governor is composed of M. S. Stone, State Superintendent of Education, L. B. Johnson, publisher of the Herald and News at Randolph, E. W. Gibson, judge of the municipal court at Brattleboro, Marshall M. Stocker of Danville and W. P. Abbott, superintendent of schools at Proctor.

So distinguished were the services rendered during the war by the officers, graduates and students of the university, that in 1870 the Legislature authorized the enlistment of the corps of cadets into companies of infantry and a section of artillery. Later, the institution was made the military college of the State and its work is now regularly inspected by officers of the State militia and regular army officers, while an army officer is stationed there as military instructor. Friends of the school pre-

active service. Of course the normal boy takes naturally to gun and sword and the training at Norwich may seem a good deal like play at first, but before four years of rigid discipline and hard training are ended the course becomes serious work.

The inspection by officers of the United States army is thorough and without favor. Officers of the National Guard know how thoroughly their companies are inspected, and they realize that the same thoroughness is applied to Norwich. Commendation from the inspecting officers is therefore based on actual merit, and the following taken from some recent reports, indicate the military standing of the school:

"It stands at the head of all the colleges in this inspection." "Parents who are in search of some institution where self-control and self-discipline (all important factors in future success) are made prominent features, and receive special attention in the education, might do well

to visit Norwich University." "If it be thought that the tone of this report is enthusiastic, that is as I intend it. I consider that this little college with its small numbers and resources is giving an immense return to the government for the use of its cadet rifles and the services of Capt. Hovey as professor." "This is certainly one of the very best military schools in the country." "What surprises me perhaps more than any other single thing was the scrupulous attention to military etiquette." "All in all this military department is in a highly satisfactory condition and a most valuable asset to the government."

But while special stress is laid on the military training and instruction, that is not the only feature of the school that entitles it to consideration. It was the idea of Capt. Partridge that our country would always to a large extent be depended for defense on its citizens soldiery, and that therefore young men ought to be trained in the art of war; but he also believed that their other education should not be neglected. He was not only a highly trained military man, perhaps the best military authority in the country in his day, but he was proficient in and taught other branches besides the military art. Prof. Marsh, who joined the faculty when the school was first opened, was distinguished as a philologist as well as a diplomat, and Gen. Jackson, whose name will ever shed lustre on the institution was a distinguished mathematician. It has always been the aim of the instructors to have the school give a complete and thorough course of instruction.

Nor have all the graduates who have won distinction gained honors in military life. Distinction as great has come to civilians.

Engineers Graduated.

Among the distinguished engineers sent out from Norwich are Edwin F. Johnson, chief engineer of the Northern Pacific and engineer of other important works; Gen. G. M. Dodge, surveyor for the Union Pacific and chief engineer for a part of its construction; Monro Robinson, engineer for a number of Southern railroads; Col. G. M. Totten, chief engineer of the Panama Railroad and associated with De Lesseps; Col. W. H. Greenwood, of the Denver and Rio Grande and Mexico Central; Gen. F. W. Lander, who constructed the first trans-continental wagon road across the Rocky Mountains to California. In fact there is hardly a railroad enterprise in the country or in the countries to the South in which Norwich men have not had a prominent and creditable part.

Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy under Lincoln and Johnson, graduated from Norwich in '26. Thomas Davis, Attorney General in the Cabinet of Jefferson Davis, was also a Norwich man. The institution has furnished eight Governors,



DEAN H. R. ROBERTS.

whom they could engage in fierce but bloodless contests. Today they have to "take it out" in foot ball and basket ball.

Military Standing.

The military standing of the university has always been recognized by the highest authorities. Gen. Sherman said of it that at one time it almost rivaled the academy at West Point. As it was the first military school in the country, outside West Point, so it is now the only military collegiate institution in New England to which a regular army officer is detailed. The influence of these men on the student body has been great and beneficial. Tuthery and Hovey and Chapman, and Gen. O. O. Howard as an occasional lecturer have given the students an idea of what soldiering really means and the military instruction is of the thorough character to fit the boys for

including Ryland Fletcher of Vermont, Thomas H. Seymour of Connecticut, Horatio Seymour of New York, William Pitt Kellogg of Louisiana, and Thomas Bragg of North Carolina; four Lieutenant Governors and sixteen Congressmen besides a large number of foreign ministers and consuls.

Of the prominent lawyers among the graduates are William Augustus Beach, remembered by those who recall the famous Beecher trial, Luther R. Marsh, partner of Daniel Webster, Luther R. Dixon, justice of the Supreme Court of Wisconsin, Jonathan Tarbell of the Supreme Court of Mississippi, William L. Lee, chief justice of the Hawaiian Islands, and B. F. Spaulding of the Supreme Court of North Dakota.

The successful business men who received their education there are scattered all over the country and in other countries. Their occupations include manufacturing of various sorts, banking, ranching, planting and railroading.

It was Capt. Partridge's idea that the training of the cadets should make for peace through preparedness for war, so it is not surprising to learn that more than fifty cadets have won distinction in the military. This list includes such names as Rev. A. A. Miller, Bishop W. R. Huntington, Bishop Elliot of Georgia, John Holbrook, one of the founders of the Chicago Theological Seminary, Rev. Elisha Adams, one of the founders of Tilton Seminary, and Howard F. Hill, kindly remembered in Montpelier.

More than a hundred have engaged in teaching and have filled responsible places as presidents of universities or as professors in some of the leading colleges and universities of the country.

More than fifty have taken up journalism and the list includes some distinguished names.

Literary work has engaged the attention of one hundred or more and some of those have attained eminence, while 150 or more have taken up the practice of medicine.

This is only a brief suggestion of the eminence attained in military and civil life by graduates of this modest institution, and as there are fully 500 of its earlier students about whom nothing has been learned it is safe to say that few educational institutions in the country have sent out a larger number of distinguished men, and still can point to so large a proportion of students who have filled honorable positions.

Degrees of bachelor of arts and bachelor of science in civil engineering, in chemistry or in science and literature are conferred on students who complete the courses leading to such degrees. The degree of master of arts, master of science or civil engineer may be conferred on graduates of two years' standing at Norwich or any other college who have spent at least one year in post graduate work under the direction of the faculty. Graduates who desire to engage in teaching in Vermont are entitled to a five year certificate without examination. Graduates respectively recommended by the president are commissioned second lieutenants in the National Guard.

W. A. Ellis, who has been librarian and curator, has been engaged for nearly two years in writing a history of the university, and it is now in course of publication from the Capital City Press.

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